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Male and female college students were given a questionnaire containing descriptions of four stimulus persons, with gender of stimulus person varied between groups. Subjects selected any of eight occupations for which the stimulus persons might be suited, and they rated the potential of such persons to be good parents. Traditional "masculinity" of the occupation rather than its prestige and status tended to elicit prejudice against women. In addition, for female subjects there was an interaction between personality description and gender of stimulus person that affected judgments of potential child-rearing ability. (Author)

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## Abstract

Male and female college students were given a questionnaire containing descriptions of four stimulus persons, with gender of stimulus person varied between groups. Subjects selected any of eight occupations for which the stimulus persons might be suited, and they rated the potential of such persons to be good parents. Traditional "masculinity" of the occupation rather than its prestige and status tended to elicit prejudice against women. In addition, for female subjects there was an interaction between personality description and gender of stimulus person that affected judgments of potential child-rearing ability.

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# VARIABLES AFFECTING ASSIGNMENT OF OCCUPATIONS TO MEN AND WOMEN[1]

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This paper reports the results of one study from an on-going research project investigating the nature of prejudiced attitudes toward women. An instrument was designed to measure the tendency of individuals to assign different occupations to stimulus persons who differed only in gender. Occupations were chosen to permit assessment of the independent effects of status of occupation versus "masculinity" of occupation.

In one form of prejudice, an individual may hold a conscious belief that in some or most situations "men are superior to women." But other forms of prejudice may be less conscious. An individual may see himself as an equalitarian, yet may make judgments about people that indicate the operation of a covert form of prejudice.

We organize our experience with the world into various categories, and we have general expectancies about people and situations. These expectancies can bias our perception and evaluation of individuals and groups. We may expect some categories of persons to be smarter, stronger, or more aggressive than others; we may expect to see them enjoying different forms of entertainment or occupying different occupations.

The way in which such covert prejudice affects judgments is demonstrated in a series of studies in which subjects evaluated work ostensibly produced by a man or a woman. Goldberg (1968) found that women gave higher ratings to articles from various professional disciplines when they were told the articles were written by a man. Pheterson (1969) used the same procedure with middle-aged women, but the articles concerned traditionally-feminine topics like child-rearing. In this case, women "authors" were rated higher. In a third study (Pheterson, Kiesler and Goldberg, 1971) women rated modern art paintings higher when they thought

they were painted by men. However paintings ostensibly by women were rated higher when subjects were told that the paintings had won awards. These studies indicate subjects have expectancies about the different competencies of men and women. Women were expected to know more about child-rearing than men. Men were expected to be more competent as professional artists; but when this expectancy was violated (when the women won awards), the new information produced a change in judgment.

Another set of studies indicates that when expectancies about the relative competence of men and women is violated, the result can be higher valuation of the women. Deaux and Taynor (1973) reported that subjects gave a higher evaluation to a competent male stimulus person than to a competent female, but a male of low competence was rated lower than a low-competence female. Taynor and Deaux (1973) found that women were judged more deserving of reward than men when they performed well in an emergency situation. It seems that subjects expect men to be more competent than women, and when they learn that the man is not competent, he suffers a sharper devaluation than a woman of similar ability. Women are not expected to perform well in certain emergency situations. When they do, the violation of the expectancy works in their favor.

Turning specifically to the relationship between gender and various careers and occupations, Horner (1969) reported that women more than men exhibited a "motive to avoid success". However Tresemer (1972) suggested the important variable might not be success per se, but rather success in a job that has been a traditional masculine preserve. To contemplate such success would violate expectancies about the sort of jobs that are appropriate for men and women.

The present study differentiated between the status of an occupation and its valence as a "masculine" job, and investigated the impact of these variables on assignment of jobs to stimulus persons of different

gender.

## Method

Status and Masculinity of Occupations. The first task was to determine the norms for status and "masculinity" of various jobs. Lists of occupations were presented to a number of groups of university students. They were asked to rank the jobs, and for each job to indicate whether "in our culture it is generally considered a male job, a female job, or both." As a result of these presentations, eight jobs were selected. These occupations had been consistently rated as either high or low status, either masculine or neutral gender. Two of the occupations were high status/high masculine: architect and nuclear physicist; two were low status/high masculine:stock broker and insurance agent; two were high status/neutral gender: college professor and medical doctor; two were low status/neutral gender: school teacher and bookkeeper.

Subjects. 196 females and 89 males, all students at Acadia University, participated in the study. One-quarter of these were extention students, having a greater range in age and occupational experience than the typical undergraduate.

Questionnaire. The Job Judgments questionnaire was designed for the study. Subjects were told the researcher was interested in the way people made judgments on the basis of "limited information." Descriptions offour stimulus persons were presented to the subjects:

> Joan Dawson is in her final year of college. She has an I.Q. of 120, which puts her well above average, though she is not a genius. She is friendly, would rather go to parties and meet people than stay at home and read. But, she can study when she has to. Joan is married; gets along well with her husband, although sometimes they argue about the future. Her psychological profile indicates

that she is a warm person, sensitive to criticism and full of energy.

Marvin Wilson is a high school senior, about to enter college. He has an I.Q. of 110, which means that he is at the high end of the average range. However he works very hard at his studies, and so far he has a straight-A average. While Marv is not the smartest student in his class, he makes up for it by hard work and long hours. He does not have many friends, and would rather read a challenging book than go out on a date.

Donna Brown is a college freshman. She had a I.Q. of 112, putting her in the high average range of intelligence. She is very popular, and has a full social life. Whenever there is an election for anything, Donna usually wins and does a good job. Sometimes she feels pushed for time, and wishes she had the nerve to say "no" to some of the demands that are placed on her.

Harvey Johnson is a college junior. He has an I.Q. of 125, which means he has superior intelligence. He spends long hours studying, and takes a very serious view of life. He is not very popular, although others respect his abilities and dedication. Harvey admits that he does not get along well with people.

On the alternate form of the questionnaire gender was varied and the individuals were named John, Mary, Donald and Heather. Each description ended with the instruction to circle any occupations for which the individual might be suited, and there followed in random order the list of eight occupations mentioned above. After each list subjects were asked: if the stimulus person had children how good would he(she) be as a father (mother). These ratings were made of a 7-point scale.

For the masculinity (M) scale, a point was scored whenever a subject awarded a masculine job to a stimulus person, and for the status (S) scale a point was scored when a high-status job was assigned.

## Results

The important comparisons were between stimulus persons with the same description but different gender on the two forms of the questionnaire. These comparisons were made for M, S and C scales using two-tailed t-tests. Data were analyzed independently for men and women.

Mean scores and significance values are shown in Table 1. It is evident that for both male and female subjects, the "masculinity" of

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insert Table 1 about here

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an occupation has more valence than the "status" of an occupation in eliciting prejudice against women. Stimulus persons with feminine names were often given high status jobs, but they were significantly less likely than men to be given jobs seen as traditionally masculine. This was true whether the jobs were of high status such as architect, or relatively low status such as insurance agent. This finding was borne out in a subsequent inspection of assignment of individual job categories. To take the Marvin/Mary category as an example, male subjects were four times more likely to see Mary as a teacher than Marvin, and almost four times more likely to see Marvin as a stock broker than Mary. The results were similar among high status occupations. Women were twice as likely to see Marvin as an architect than Mary, and they were twice as likely to see Mary as a medical doctor than Marvin.

Turning to the child-rearing evaluations, the results are much stronger for female than for male subjects. Females saw two females and two males as significantly better potential parents than the opposite-sex members of the stimulus pairs. It is evident that there is an effect

created by the descriptions themselves, and since the descriptions differ one from another in various ways one cannot pinpoint with certainty the "active ingredient." However it is interesting to note that two stimulus pairs are described as studious and somewhat withdrawn from social life. In these cases the female was considered a better potential parent than the male. The other two stimulus persons are described as social, popular, party-going people. Here the male was rated a better potential parent than the female. This might lead one to speculate on the possible operation of the legendary double-standard for appropriate behavior for men and women.

## Discussion

This study indicates that the traditional "masculinity" of an occupation is more important than the occupation's status as a cue for prejudice against women. Thus, female stimulus persons were seen as suitable for high status positions such as medical doctor and college professor, but were less likely than identical males to be assigned jobs like stock broker and real estate agent. These results lend support to the position that prejudice is a by-product of certain general expectancies that are held about the things women do and men do. It is not limited to a conscious belief that one group is generally "better" on some dimension than another group.

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Footnote

1 This study was accomplished with the help of Pamela O'Neill, Gerry Fucile and Seanna O'Neill.

Table 1

Mean scores for assignment of masculine jobs (M), high status jobs (S), and evaluation of child-rearing competence (C).

| | John/Joan | Marv/Mary | Don/Donna | Harv/Heather |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MALE SUBJECTS (df = 87) | | | |
| | Stimulus person pairs | | | |
| M | 1.03 0.88 | 1.48 0.92* | 1.23 0.92** | 1.80 1.31** |
| S | 1.00 0.98 | 1.46 1.18 | 0.76 0.92 | 1.62 1.59 |
| C | 5.31 5.02 | 3.88 4.31 | 4.51 4.76 | 3.02 3.56* |
| | FEMALE SUBJECTS (df = 194) | | | |
| M | 0.97 0.68** | 1.31 0.82** | 1.06 0.71* | 1.55 1.39 |
| S | 0.84 0.97 | 1.30 1.19 | 1.05 0.88 | 1.63 1.56 |
| C | 5.55 5.22* | 3.73 4.32*** | 5.02 4.67* | 2.84 3.34** |

two-tailed t-tests: * < .05
** < .01
*** < .001